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The status of foreign language education is discussed in the context of increased enrollments and the current fervor to raise academic standards generally. Problems related to the increased enrollments in high school language courses (audiolingually oriented), and the rather inflexible attitudes of college language departments (literature oriented) are identified. Attention is given to such components as high school and FLES courses, college courses, College Boards, Advanced Placement, and the preparation of language teachers. Some suggestions, mostly concerned with teacher hiring practices, are made. (AF)

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The Schools Take Over Foreign Languages

ELTON HOCKING

After a decade of revolution, confusion and much technical progress in foreign language teaching, it is time to assess the situation. Ten years ago the pendulum of public favor began to swing back toward us: our enrollments, after 30 years of decline, began to increase. Let me quote an authoritative comment from those days. The speaker was William Riley Parker, Executive Secretary of the Modern Language Association, Director of its Foreign Language Program and consultant to Congress on the National Defense Education Act of 1958. Addressing the annual meeting of the MLA in 1955, he said in part:

> "I am completely convinced that the tide has turned, that American indifference or hostility to language learning is gradually diminishing. There is only one reason why this discovery is not cause for general rejoicing: it so happens that countless people now ready to give us their support do not mean what many foreign language teachers mean by language learning. It remains to be seen what they will say and do when they discover that we don't teach what they assume we teach, but insist, rather, on giving them what we believe is good for them. They ask for bread, and we give them a tome. They express their awareness of needs in the second half of the twentieth century; we are holding on grimly to educational objectives that we inherited from the nineteenth century classical tradition or that we formulated in the public schools when two years seemed the maximum time allotted us." (*PMLA*, April 1956, p. 12)

Mr. Parker's forebodings now seem justified. First came the usual problems of revolution: confusion, excessive promises fulfilled too little and too late, and of course passive resistance by the unconverted. These normal obstacles might have been overcome, had it not been for the impact of two unprecedented developments: the sudden doubling and redoubling of modern language enrollments, and the Sputnik-inspired fervor to raise academic standards generally. The foreign language revolution, born of poverty, became lost in a wealth of students. The audio-lingual approach seemed unsuited to mass instruction, college entrance became increasing difficult, and college departments of languages were ambiguous in their attitude: while proclaiming the value of the oral-auditory skills, they maintained or increased their emphasis on literary studies, and most of them continued to conduct their courses in English. There remained therefore the temptation to "hold on grimly to educational objectives that we inherited from the nineteenth century classical tradition."

THE SHIFTING CENTER OF GRAVITY

Nevertheless, as we approach the twenty-first century, the basic situation has changed drastically: although col-

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leges continue to provide the teaching aims, methods and many of the materials, it is the schools which now have a huge and increasing majority of the enrollments. In a decade modern language enrollments in grades 9-12 have increased from three-fourths of a million to two and one-half million, while the college enrollments have scarcely caught up to the high school figure of ten years ago. The disparity is even greater when FLES enrollments are added: from an estimated 200,000 in 1952 to perhaps four million today, including TV classes. In short, the college figures are about one-ninth of the total. Moreover, many schools are now providing long sequences of study: six, eight, or even ten years in some communities, and there has been a massive increase in fourth-year high school enrollments. These long sequences, even more than the numerical superiority, would seem to call for an educational philosophy consistent with the general aims of secondary education; yet higher education acts as if the long sequences in the schools were merely a device to procure college student specialists in literature.

THE COLLEGE-BOUND "MAJORITY"

Since Sputnik, our youth has been increasingly urged to get a college education, so that today some 50 per cent of our high school graduates (but still a minority of the students) are competing for the available places in the colleges. The word has gone forth that college entrance is eased by a high school transcript showing sequences in the "solid subjects" — English, math, science and foreign language. National examinations abound, and inevitably they influence the teaching of the courses in school. The new MLA-ETS Cooperative Test will doubtless do this with desirable results, since it is concerned with the language skills, but superimposed on it and on the regular "College Boards" is the Advanced Placement Test, with its emphasis on belles lettres. The intent of the Advanced Placement Program is to move the first truly collegiate course (normally a survey of literature) down into the high school, and thus to hasten enrollment in advanced courses in college. This is a questionable venture, even for those students who achieve advanced standing, since success in the survey course requires a degree of literary and emotional maturity not always possessed even by college freshmen. Moreover, it is doubtful that high school students can afford to curtail their linguistic work in favor of literary studies. But since this question has been searchingly analyzed elsewhere it needs no further discussion here. (Robert J. Nelson, "The Relation of Language to Literature in the Advanced Placement Program," *French Review,* May, 1963, pp. 617-628). Our concern is with the high school students who do not achieve advanced standing or even aspire to it. For them the side-effects of the Advanced Placement Program may prove to be disastrous.

MINORITY RULE

This Program, involving an elite group of perhaps 5 per cent of the school population, requires a special course or "track" for its students. In

theory the extra cost in instructional time can be justified; in practice the additional instruction is frequently not available, especially in schools with only a small number of advanced students. In this either/or situation, it is tempting for the teacher to choose the Advanced Placement Program on the assumption (or rationalization) that the students will probably go to college anyway, and the best of them should not be denied a chance at the Advanced Placement test. The German committee of the Advanced Placement Program takes this for granted: "When there is no provision for a special advanced section of fourth-year German, the Advanced Placement candidates . . . may be given the reading from the second (Advanced Placement) list . . . in addition to the basic reading from the first (Advanced Placement) list." (*Advanced Placement Program: Course Descriptions,* CEEB, Princeton, 1964, pp. 99-100.)

The school which adopts this attitude will be tempted to realign its lower courses, since they will culminate in the Advanced Placement Program. The students will soon pass the word: "Don't enroll in an advanced course unless you want the Advanced Placement Program." Gradually the teacher's either/or choice disappears. Thus we come full circle: dominated yesterday by the college-bound minority, the modern language sequence now becomes dominated by the Advanced Placement sub-minority. And the trend toward the long sequence is thereby discouraged.

Higher Education and Lower Courses

The essential problem is that, with notable exceptions, college teachers are not interested in lower-level courses. Professors are humanists; their professional background and their current interests are literary. Their status symbol is the advanced course, preferably at the graduate level, while academic promotion is based on scholarly research and publication. They tend to consider lower-division teaching as mere hack work, unworthy of their own efforts but financially valuable to the graduate students who teach such courses. Even this humble function is now being gradually taken over by federal and other fellowships which, if they continue to increase in number, will solve the bread-and-butter problem. Higher education therefore looks forward to the day — not very distant — when it will teach the lower courses only to the relatively few students who begin a second or a third foreign language. In these circumstances it would be unrealistic to expect the colleges to show any general and eager interest in the improvement of the lower courses.

A decade ago the situation was very different. The MLA then led a vigorous surge of interest and action inspired by a fear verging on panic. With modern language enrollments dangerously low and still declining, the professors perceived that, if their advanced courses were to survive, the lower courses must be invigorated and improved — and populated. But even in those days it was difficult for the MLA to find mem-

bers willing to provide their personal services. Today the leadership continues but the profession sits back, for the crisis is past. Enrollment in the college courses have reached an all-time high, and now it is the professors who are in short supply. They can say in all truth that "they never had it so good."

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The crisis has not really disappeared. It has been transformed and moved down into the schools, where students overflow the language classrooms and dozens of pedagogical innovations bewilder the teacher. There is the language laboratory, first of all, designed for use by college students, and now, thanks to the NDEA, used mostly in the schools. But not necessarily well used, or even used at all; for the special learning materials designed for the language lab followed belatedly after the equipment. Many schools with good labs are stuck with obsolete materials which, because of inflexible rules on textbook adoptions, must linger for several years. The new materials themselves sometimes present problems. Written or influenced by professors of dscriptive linguistics, they are based on unfamiliar concepts: sound before sight, structure before vocabulary, patterns before meaning, minimal steps, overlearning, terminal behavior, shaping, and so on. The elaborate printed manual, twice as thick as the student's textbook, is often, and unwisely, rejected by the experienced teacher. The integrated A-V materials are seldom mentioned by the book reviewers, or purchased by the school board, which thinks of "materials" only as printed matter.

MANY high school teachers are confused by all these innovations, and even the most enlightened and capable keep a wary eye on the "College Board" exams, which have been slow to attune themselves to the New Key. The CEEB has been especially reluctant to test speaking ability, which is a primary goal of the new teaching. Another restraining influence is the nearby no-nonsense college department which conducts its classes in English and requires students to translate, conjugate, and recite the rules of grammar. But the overriding factor is personal experience, compounded with expediency. In high school as in college, we tend to teach as we were taught and to experiment only when there is ample time, money, and — especially — encouragement and recognition for doing so. But with overcrowded classes and administrative inertia, we postpone the audio-lingual techniques, even when we approve of them. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.*

THE MISEDUCATION OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS

The prevalent attitude of the colleges toward modern language teacher training is apparent in a recent MLA report. (*PMLA*, May, 1964, pp. 1-15). Entitled "The Preparation of College Teachers of Modern Foreign Languages," it refers only incidentally to

the preparation of the secondary teacher, since this is to be the subject of a separate MLA study. The report simply urges that the foreign language components of the undergraduate program should be identical for all teacher-candidates, whether bound for high school or college. The only provision made specifically for high school teacher candidates is appropriate training in methods, with the implied recommendation of a five-year program. As for the graduate program, no attempt is made to provide for the vast differences in the nature and purpose of the M.A. in institutions like Princeton and Columbia on the one hand, and those typified by the large state universities which regularly prepare large numbers of M.A.s for public school teaching. Training in the culture (anthropological concept) is advocated along with methods and linguistics, but A-V and programmed learning are barely mentioned.

The report is signed by representatives of some of our most prestigious college and university departments. By its tacit assumptions, no less than by its statements, it tells us that, although graduate students must actually serve as teachers of foreign language, they are really prepared only for research. In many universities, much of the undergraduate teaching is used to subsidize graduate students. As James B. Conant has pointed out in his latest book, "The Education of American Teachers," the more illustrious the department, the less concerned are its professors with the quality of undergraduate work, and as for what goes on in the schools, "they couldn't care less."

The same attitude is again evident in the responses to a questionnaire by a special committee of the American Association of University Professors. A sampling of the membership received a list of some 50 occupations and were asked to number them in declining order of preference, that is, to start with the ones they would most like to engage in. They numbered at the very bottom of the list "high school teacher."

Such an attitude is not lost on the young teacher-candidate, who can only prepare to teach as he was taught, that is, with a half-guilty feeling that the teaching of mere language is hack work, and that literary scholarship alone confers respectability. It is no wonder that some of our high school colleagues behave like frustrated teachers of literature and prematurely assign literary works as "reading." Their perspiring students must fight their way through a masterpiece, looking up hundreds of words in the dictionary. It is a losing fight for all hands, but the greatest loser is literature.

The linguistic scientists have a healthy respect for language as such, and the NDEA Institutes have made a place for them. It is a rather small place, however, and the professors of literature are somewhat suspicious of them. As for the professors of education, they have no place in the Institutes. The psychology of the new teaching is rarely mentioned, the laboratory is generally relegated to underlings, and the A-V techniques and devices are

almost unknown. The most valuable work of the Institutes is surely the audio-oral practice, but by general agreement most participants need to attend at least two or three Institues.

Saddest of all is the fact that a great many — probably most — of the newly-graduated teachers are in immediate need of retraining by the Institutes. A recent questionnaire from the Oregon Department of Education found that, of that state's 1962 and 1963 crop of new teachers, three-fourths had not been trained in the new methods and materials. This evidence is generally confirmed by the experience of the Institutes. Evidently the massive effort to retrain teachers is a losing one: the colleges and universities are turning out ill-prepared teachers faster than the Institutes can retrain them. This is obviously true for secondary teachers; as for elementary, we have scarcely begun to train them.

CONCLUSION

It seems clear that, a decade after Mr. Parker's warning, we really are still "holding on grimly to . . . the nineteenth-century classical tradition." We still do not teach what countless people assume we teach, but rather we give them what we believe is good for them. "They ask for bread, and we give them a tome." Or to express it differently, millions of dollars of public funds, and millions of children in public schools, are subordinated to two archaic assumptions by higher education: first, that the principal function of the schools is college-preparatory: and second, that the advanced study of "language" must in fact be the study of literature. The acceptance of these assumptions distorts language teaching in general, and teacher training in particular.

What is the remedy, then? There is no single remedy, but gradual improvement is possible with a combination of measures, all based on the wide use and widely-publicized scores made on the new MLA tests: the Cooperative Test of Student Achievement, and the Test of Teacher Proficiency. These new and excellent measures of linguistic skills provide the fulcrum for a truly national upraising of our language teaching; an informed and aroused public opinion will supply the leverage.

THE National School Boards Association, the American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the Department of Elementary School Principals, and similar societies should formally recommend to all their members that no applicant for a modern language teaching position be considered unless his credentials include scores on the MLA Teacher Proficiency Test. (A current survey by the MLA indicates that four-fifths of the liberal arts colleges do not use any such test.) It will require courage to enforce this program and time for it to succeed. But if the big city and suburban school systems take the lead, publicize their policy, and inform college department heads of their rejections, the result will soon be felt. A bit of scandal will not be out of order, for we face a scandal-

ous situation. The language departments of the prestige institutions are among the worst offenders, and they must be forced or shamed into reform. The lesser departments will then fall into line.

School boards and superintendents must have the courage to reject teacher candidates, and the resourcefulness to fill the temporary void. A large school system can do this by a combination of measures: TV programs and team teaching by the hold-over staff, regular use of the *good* self-instructional "programs" that have recently become available, individualized reading programs for the advanced students, and at all levels imaginative use of the language laboratory and the A-V materials and devices.

All these have been used occasionally and separately, here and there; the combined and systematic use of them is overdue, and the large school systems can lead the way. Tradition and sheer habit have made our profession assume that a foreign language must be taught in single formation, by one person facing and haranguing 25 or 30 younger persons who are lined up like a glee club and looking at their books. This was good enough, perhaps, in a day when a few glee clubs provided all the music for a national audience, and the directors had only to beat time. But today's public is no mere audience. It wants to get into the act and make music, and it demands that the leaders be performing musicians. I propose that we accept the challenge, abandon the glee club formation, and use all the instruments at our disposal. Such was the intent of the NDEA, enacted in the national interest.

ESSENTIAL to the national interest today is a reasonable understanding and tolerance of ethnic groups and foreign peoples. This has been well termed "a new educational imperative." Such understanding or tolerance is surely the work of the schools rather than the colleges, for prejudices, like languages, are best learned in childhood. Now it would be absurd to pretend that knowledge of a foreign language insures tolerance of the other people; Winston Churchill once commented that the British and the Americans were "divided by a common language."

But the long sequences of foreign language study do open up exciting new possibilities: for example, the integration of social studies with a foreign language. Based on the Trump Plan, using a wealth of A-V resources from abroad, and preferably vitalized by the presence of exchange pupils from the country concerned, such a long-term immersion in a foreign civilization and language could provide socio-cultural insights and empathic understanding of another people. Literature would of course have its part in this — a more meaningful part than at present — for it would be presented, like the language itself, in its full situational and behavioral context.

Such experimentation is appropriate and possible only in the schools. It will require vigorous leadership by administrators and supervisors, and at least

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one per cent of the school budget allocated to research and experimentation. (Today the allotment is about one-tenth of one per cent.) It will require, for the teachers, time to think and to plan, and time to teach. But the new opportunities and the new tools are at hand, and our schools — meaning our teachers — will not fail to make the most of them.